



2016 PACIFIC ISLAND DEVELOPMENT FORUM LEADERS' SUMMIT
12th & 13th July 2016, Kitano Mendana Hotel, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Stewardship for Healthy Oceans & Healthy Nations

PRIME MINISTER MANNASSEH SOGAVARE
WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY
LAWSON TAMA STADIUM
Tuesday 12th July, 2016

Hon Josiah Voreqe Bainimarama

Chief Guest & Prime Minister of Fiji Islands

His Excellency Peter M Christian

President of the Federated States of Micronesia

Honourable Dr Teue Toatu

Special Envoy of His Excellency Beretitenti of the Republic of Kiribati

Hon Aisake Valu Eke

Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Tonga

Hon Taukelina Finikaso

Minister of Finance of Tuvalu

Her Excellency Kim Aroi

Acting High Commissioner of Nauru to Fiji Islands

His Excellency Albon Ishoda

Special Representative of the Republic of Marshall Islands

Madam Margeret Sapolu

Planning Advisor Tokelau

Mr Siotame Drew Havea

Chairman of Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organization

Mr Bruce Saunders

Representative of Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocols Observed:

Halo oloketa wantok and a Very Good Morning to you all.

On behalf of the people and Government of Solomon Islands, I would like to welcome you to Honiara for this 2016 Pacific Islands Development Forum Leaders Summit.

It is a great honour to receive this event in Solomon Islands. I am glad to say that it is not the first time that we hold a regional high-level meeting of this nature but this one is special to us. I say it is special because it is the first time for the PIDF Leaders Summit to move out of its home base. I hope that we will match your expectations and compel you to take the best of our discussions back to your respective countries.

This PIDF Leaders Summit is significant especially with the presence of Charter Members, Foundational Members, Technical Partners, International and Regional Organizations. In this regard, among others I would like to acknowledge the presence in the grand stand of Representative of the State of Kuwait and Representative of the Peoples Republic of China.

I would also like to mention the participation of Non-Government Organizations, Civil Society Groups, Participating Sporting Teams in the Solomon Games, Youth Groups and young students from schools around Honiara City. I am glad that we can all learn from each other and this diversity in the stadium today is the very nature that makes the PIDF different from other organizations. This is the unique system of the PIDF that we now cherish and shall preserve in the long run. On top of this uniqueness, the PIDF also favours gender, social mix and plural thinking as the basis of a new equality in the format of a tripod.

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The PIDF Leaders Summit 2016 focuses on the theme of **Stewardship for Healthy Oceans and Healthy Nations**. The theme recognises the fact that the health, wealth, history, culture and identity of the peoples of the Pacific Islands are vast and diverse. The theme underpins the role oceans play to the biological diversity of our people. It reinforces the fact that the geographical vastness of our nations is immeasurable. We cannot deny the fact that we are oceans people; we live by the ocean and we are big ocean states.

Furthermore, we can easily correlate the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals to the health and welfare of the ocean that we share among us. Oceans cover approximately 70.8% or 361 million square kilometres of earth's surface with a volume of about 1,370

million cubic kilometres. The oceans contain 97% of our planets available water. In our Pacific region, we can say that careful management of our ocean is key to our sustainable future.

The theme of Stewardship for Healthy Oceans and Healthy Nations is also meant to stimulate the intellectual thinking capacities of our Pacific Islands Leaders who are present here today for this PIDF Leaders Summit. Let us have this intellectual stimulation to save the health of our ocean and safeguard the identity of our nations.

That said, on behalf of every Solomon Islanders, I applaud your stewardship for a healthy ocean and healthy nations. Your 2-day deliberation on this theme is watched by the peoples and the Governments that we represent in the region. I urge you to make maximum use of the opportunity that we have now to save our ocean for the good of our peoples and the governments and countries that we represent.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Solomon Islands is your home away from home, as such, I invite you take time out of your busy schedule and enjoy the beauty of our beloved country, cherish the love and generosity of our good peoples and enjoy our friendly hospitality and warmth of our tropical paradise.

Welcome and enjoy the Solomon Islands.